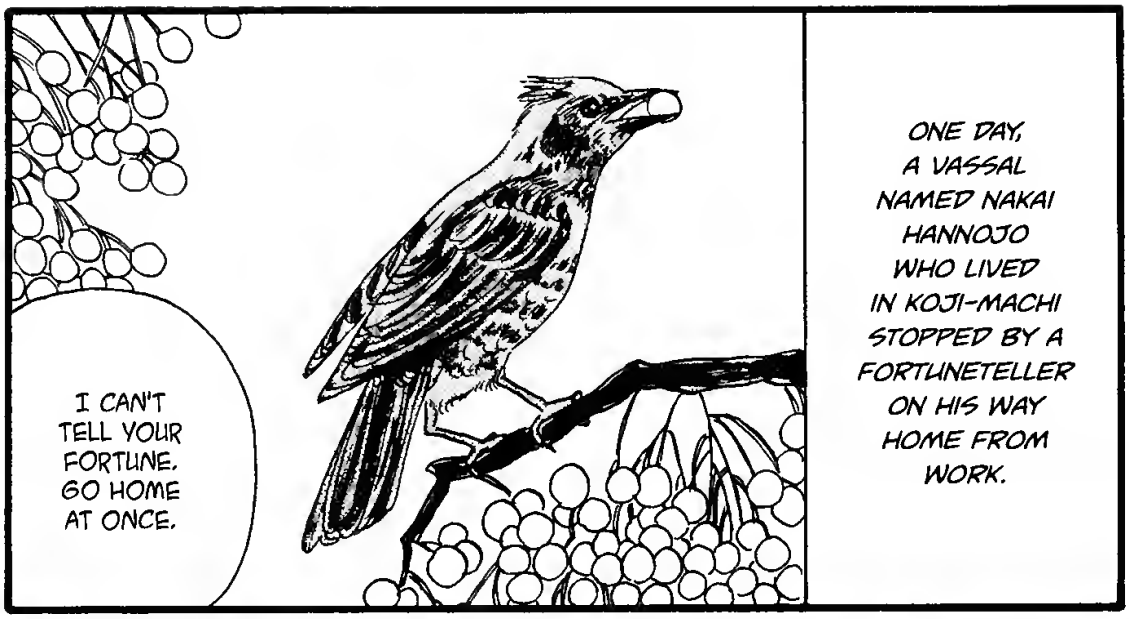
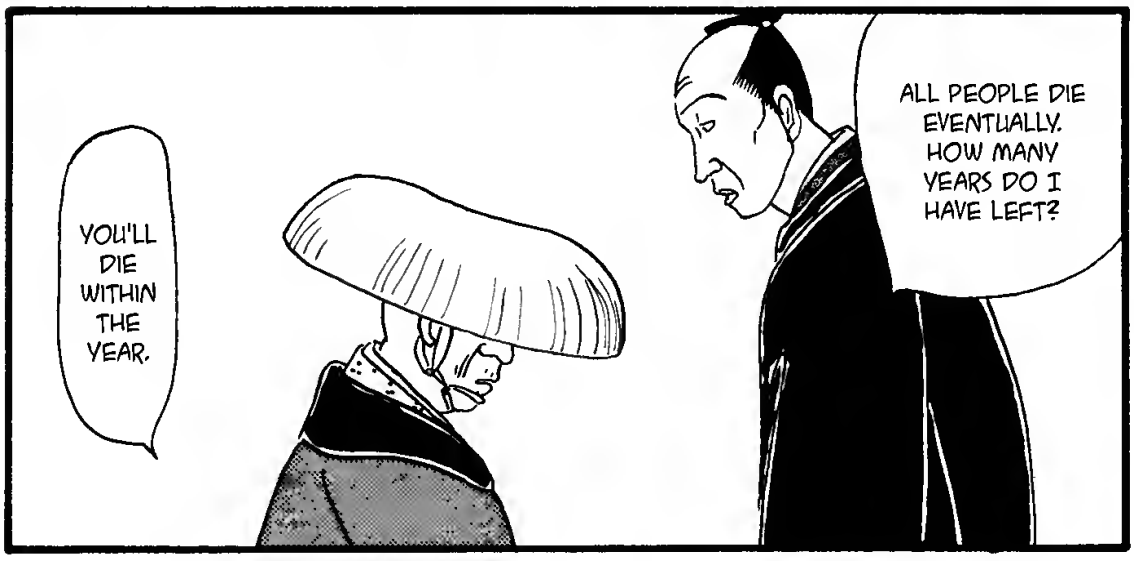
Tale 28

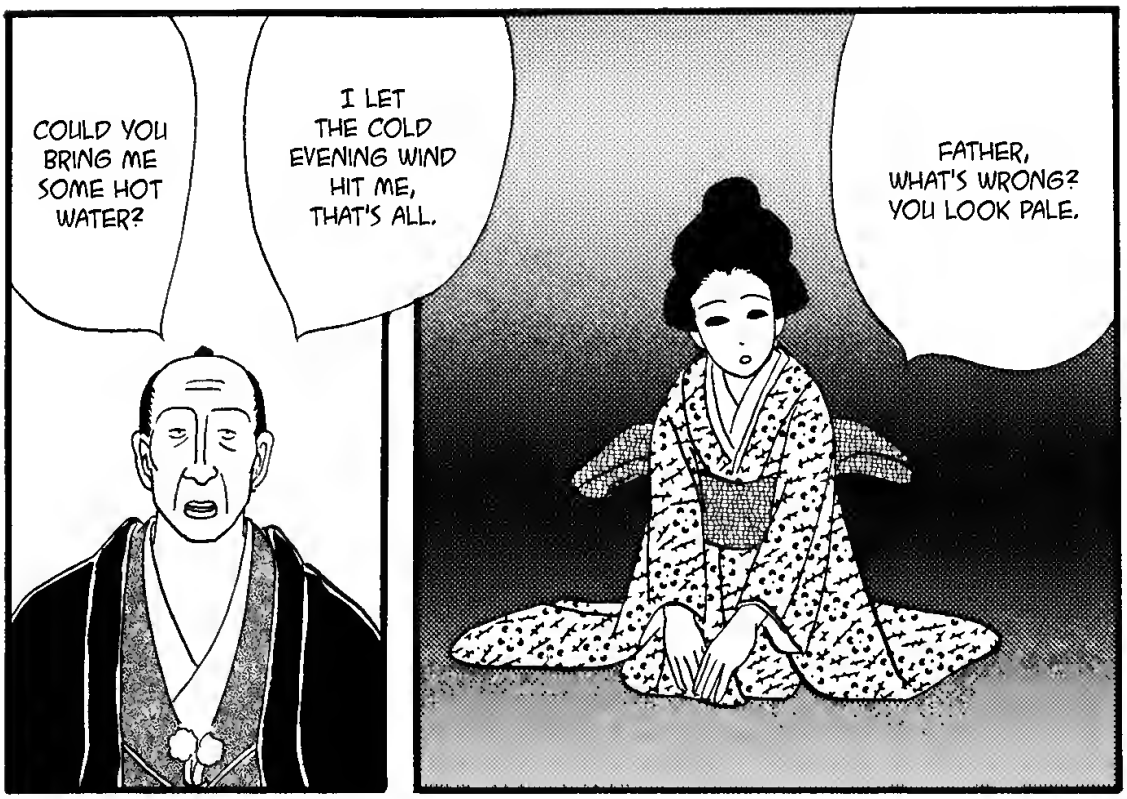
Emissary from the Underworld


I CAN'T TELL YOUR FORTUNE. GO HOME AT ONCE.
ONE DAY, A VASSAL NAMED NAKAI HANNOJO WHO LIVED IN KOJI-MACHI STOPPED BY A FORTUNETELLER ON HIS WAY HOME FROM WORK.

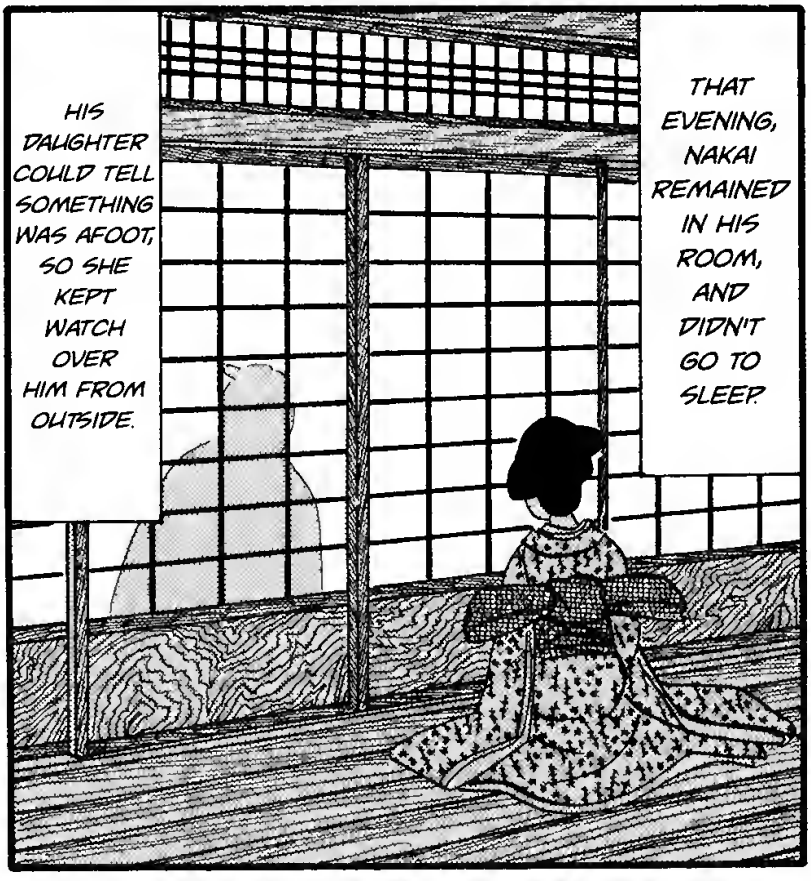
YOUR LIFE IS ABOUT TO END.
WHY NOT? IS SOMETHING BAD GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME?
DON'T WORRY, JUST TELL ME THE TRUTH.

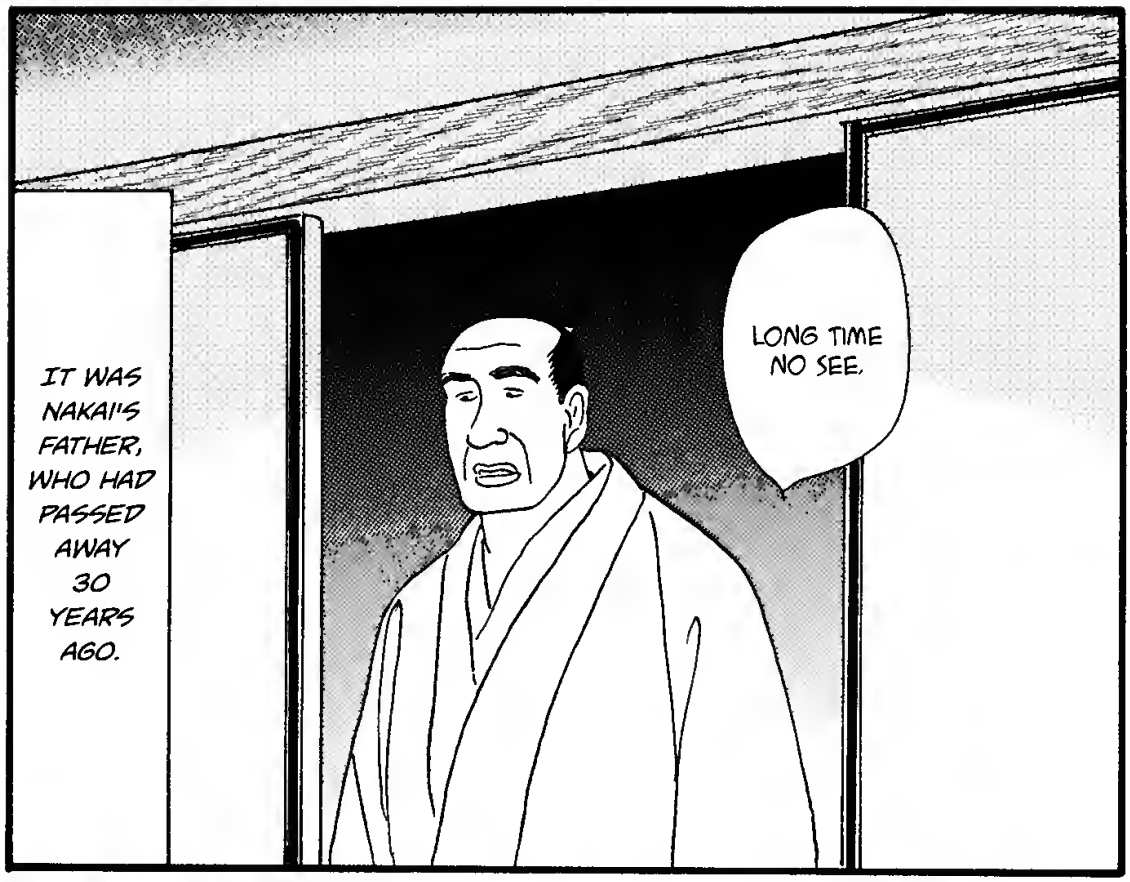

YOU'LL DIE WITHIN THE YEAR.
ALL PEOPLE DIE EVENTUALLY. HOW MANY YEARS DO I HAVE LEFT?

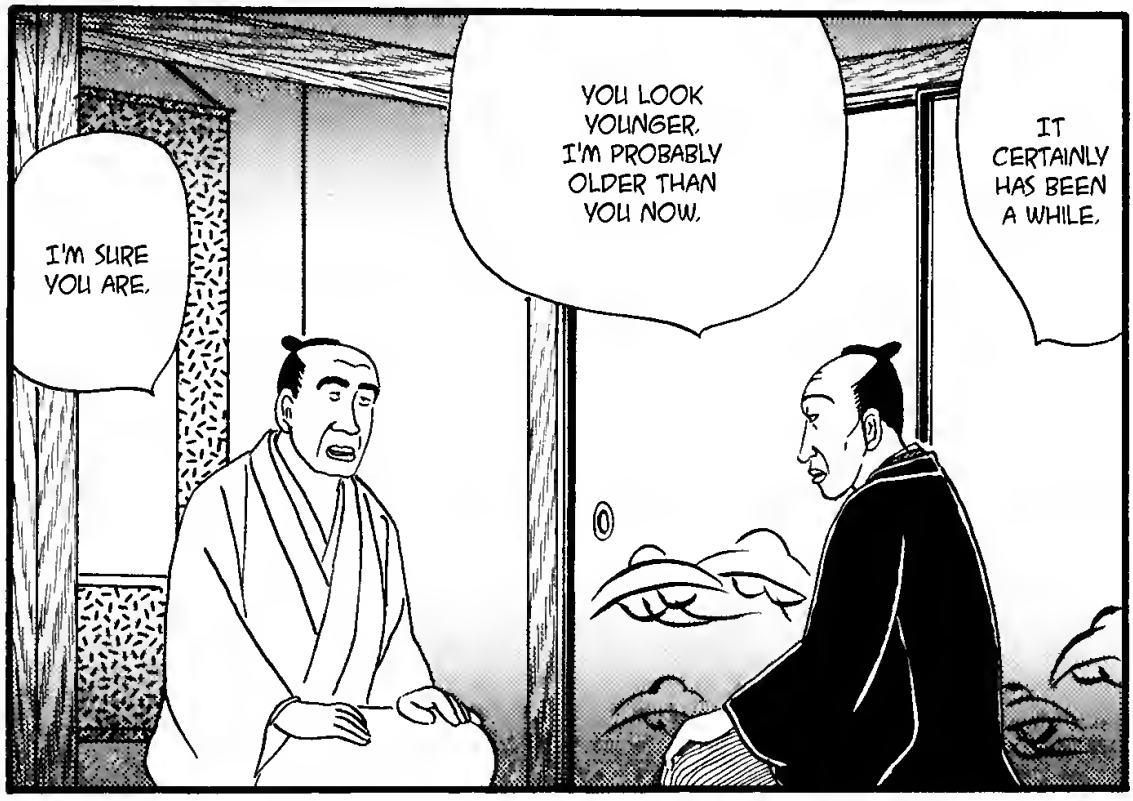
THIS MONTH.
IN WHAT MONTH?
TODAY.
ON WHAT DAY?
AT MIDNIGHT.
I SEE. DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME I'LL DIE?
I DON'T FEEL THE LEAST BIT ILL, THOUGH.
HOW STRANGE.

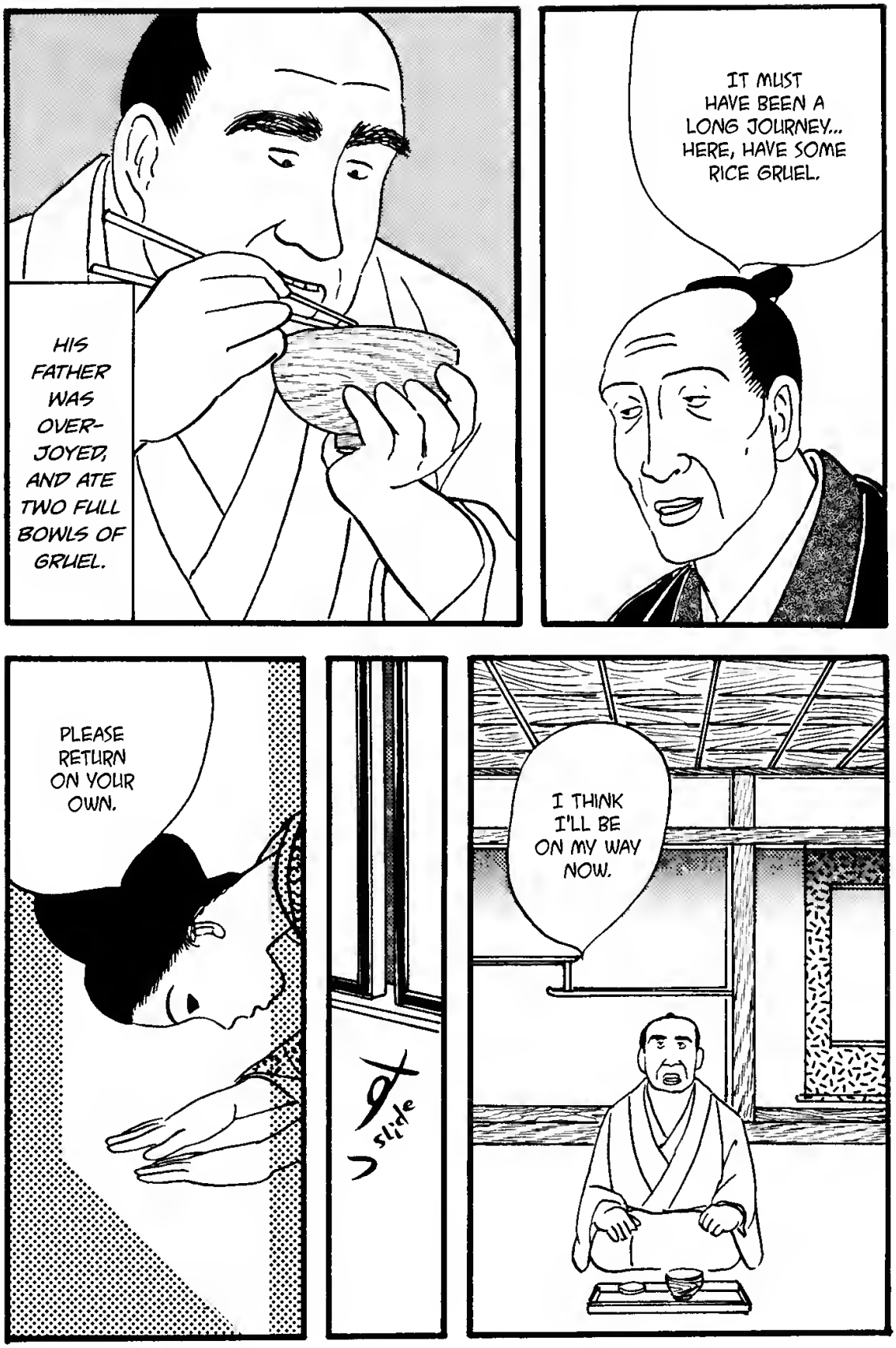

FATHER, WHAT'S WRONG? YOU LOOK PALE.
I LET THE COLD EVENING WIND HIT ME, THAT'S ALL.
COULD YOU BRING ME SOME HOT WATER?

TIME PASSED, UNTIL SUDDENLY A VISITOR ARRIVED AT THE ENTRANCE.

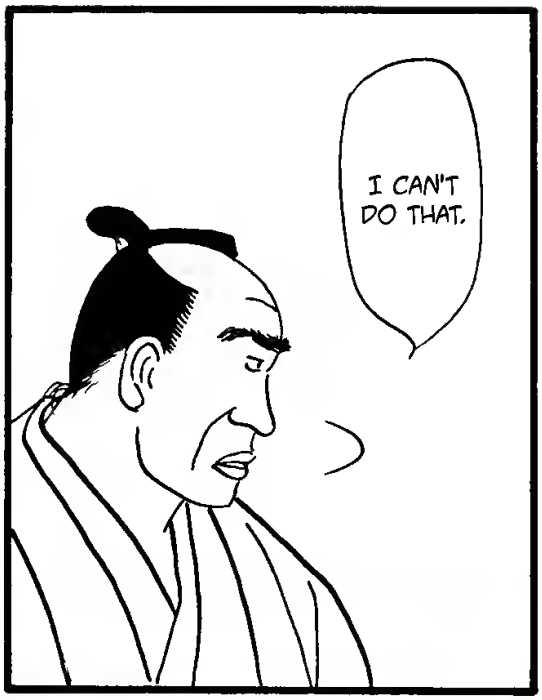

HIS DAUGHTER COULD TELL SOMETHING WAS AFOOT, SO SHE KEPT WATCH OVER HIM FROM OUTSIDE.
THAT EVENING, NAKAI REMAINED IN HIS ROOM, AND DIDN'T GO TO SLEEP.

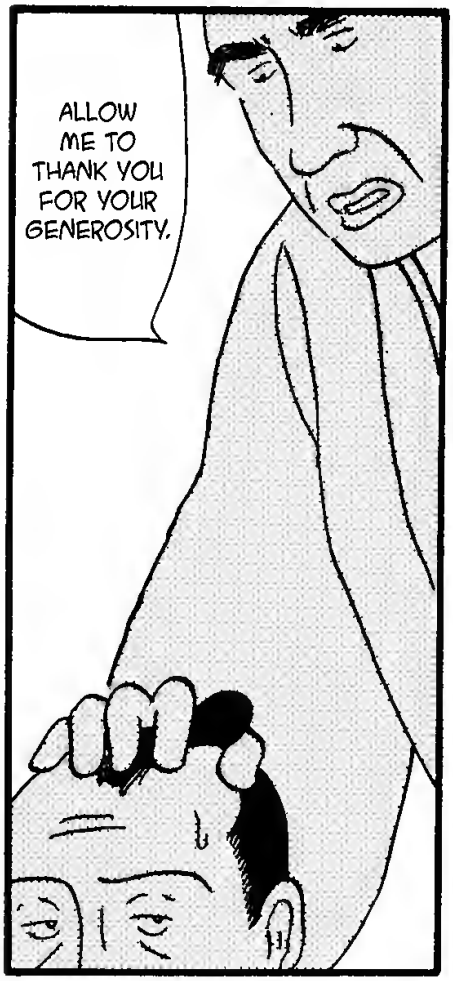

IT WAS NAKAI'S FATHER, WHO HAD PASSED AWAY 30 YEARS AGO.
LONG TIME NO SEE.

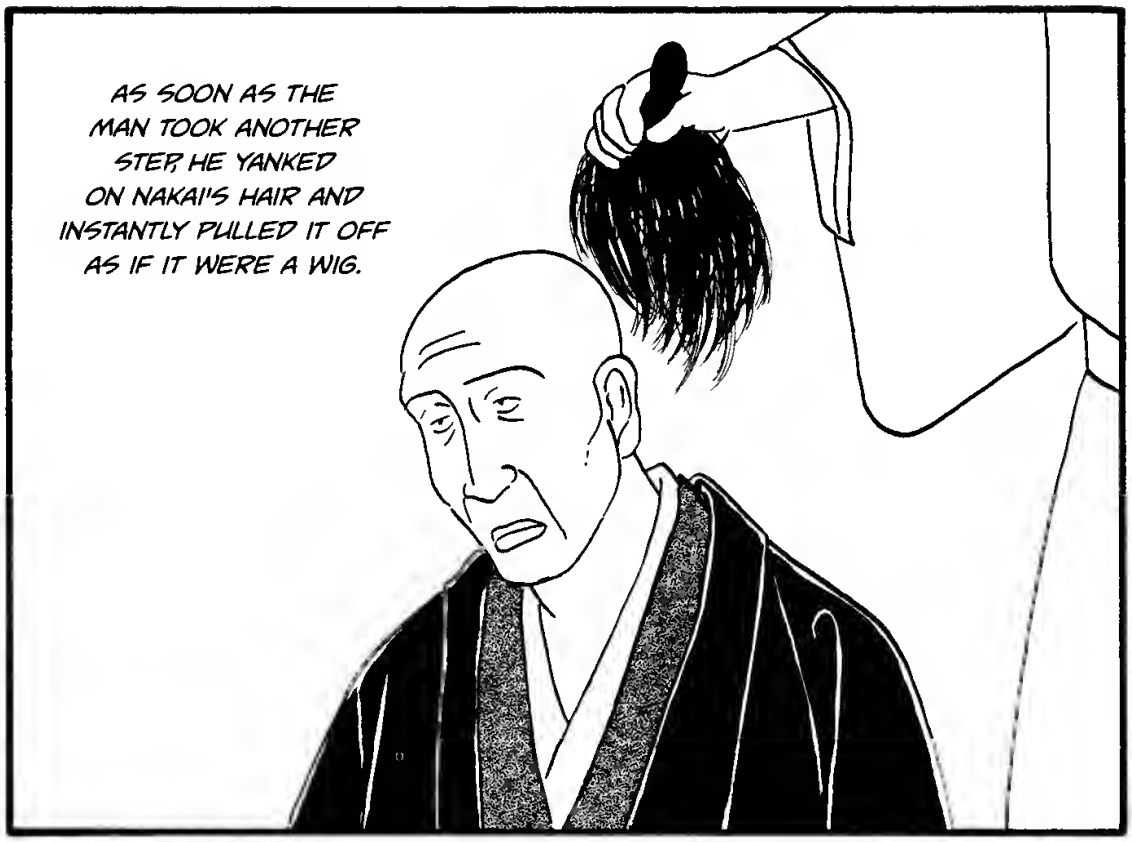

I'M SURE YOU ARE.
YOU LOOK YOUNGER. I'M PROBABLY OLDER THAN YOU NOW.
IT CERTAINLY HAS BEEN A WHILE.

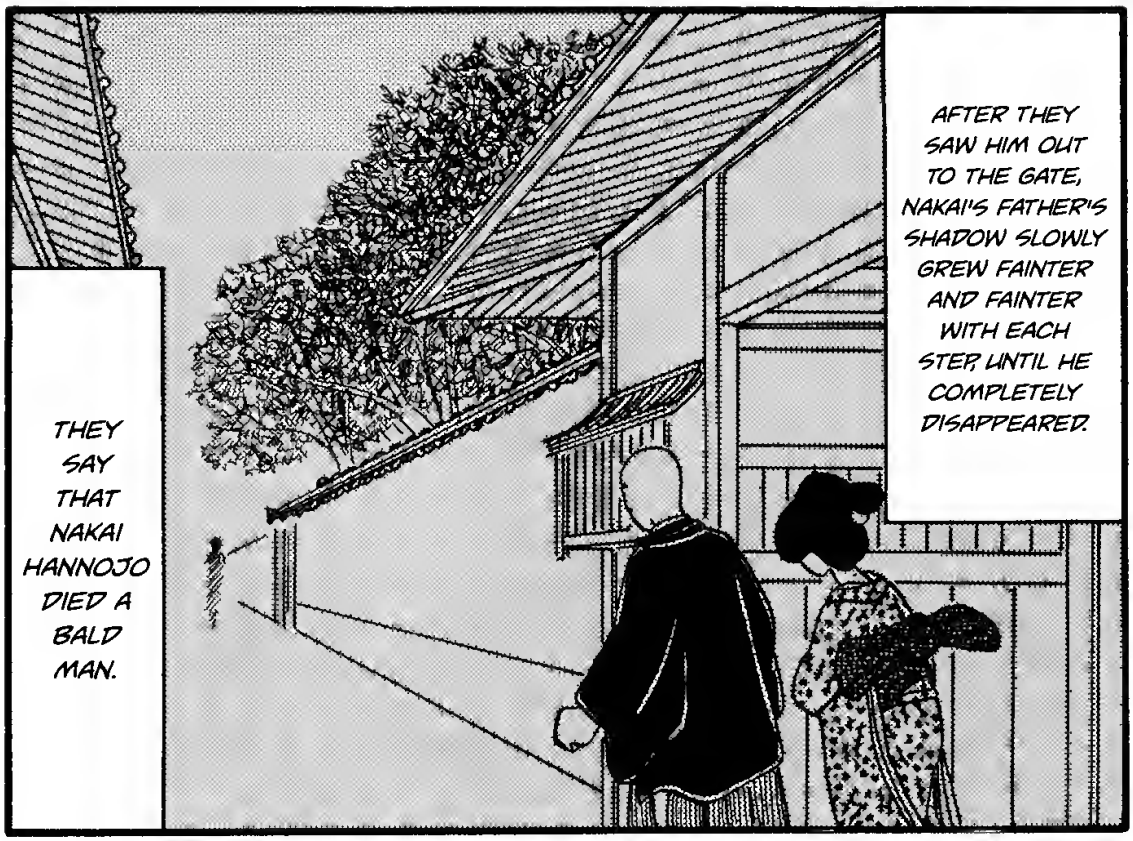

HIS FATHER WAS OVER-JOYED, AND ATE TWO FULL BOWLS OF GRUEL.
IT MUST HAVE BEEN A LONG JOURNEY... HERE, HAVE SOME RICE GRUEL.
PLEASE RETURN ON YOUR OWN.
slide
I THINK I'LL BE ON MY WAY NOW.

PLEASE,
I BEG YOU.


I CAN'T
DO THAT.


ALLOW
ME TO
THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
GENEROSITY.


AS SOON AS THE MAN TOOK ANOTHER STEP, HE YANKED ON NAKAI'S HAIR AND INSTANTLY PULLED IT OFF AS IF IT WERE A WIG.


AFTER THEY SAW HIM OUT TO THE GATE, NAKAI'S FATHER'S SHADOW SLOWLY GREW FAINTER AND FAINTER WITH EACH STEP, UNTIL HE COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED.
THEY SAY THAT NAKAI HANNOJO DIED A BALD MAN.